

H.R.7155: The National Commission on Modernizing Military Installation Designations Act

Our military has long been at the forefront to advancing diversity and inclusion in American society, and it is only right that our military installations bear the names of military heroes who represent the best ideals of our Republic. The designation of military installations in memory of individuals is intended to bestow permanent, lasting honor to deceased military and civilian personnel who served our country with valor or distinction. We owe it to ourselves, to our military, our veterans, and to every American who will answer the call, that these installations serve as inclusive inspirations to the full diversity of the Armed Forces and the country as a whole.

Confederate monuments continue to be used to perpetuate hatred even today. The installations covered by H.R. 7155 were designated not in the aftermath of the Civil War, but in the mid-twentieth century during the heights of segregation and the Civil Rights movement. In this sense they are not passive memorials to historic figures but active symbols of intolerance. We cannot in good conscience require today's young service women and men to defend our country from the enemies of the future while housing and training them and their families on installations honoring the name of a leader who fought to preserve slavery and oppression.

At least ten military installations and one ship continue to honor these leaders who took up arms against their brothers in the name of slavery and who betrayed their sacred duty to the United States during the Confederate insurrection. The Civil War resulted in the death or wounding of almost 600,000 US servicemen who honored their oath to the United States and who fought to ensure 'that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights'. The men who died fighting against slavery and the Confederacy lost their lives defending the same Constitution and the same Republic that service men and women swear an oath to today.

The United States does not lack for service members who have served their country loyally, many of which passed through these installations during their time in the military. There is no military installation named after General Patton, who led troops into the Mediterranean theatre in World War II, nor is there a base named after General Marshall, who Winston Churchill lauded as the "organizer of victory" for his leadership of the Allied victory in World War II. There is no base named after General Eisenhower, who served as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in World War II and enforced the desegregation of our education system during his time as President.

H.R. 7155 firmly addresses the lasting scars of Confederate memorialization by establishing the National Commission on Modernizing Military Installation Designations, composed of eight members appointed by Congress, and one by each Service chief. This Commission will recommend redesignation of the covered installations in favor of true American heroes that provide the positive, inclusive inspiration required by memorial designations, and to whose example we can safely entrust the service women and men of today and tomorrow, such as the recent designation of CVN-81 as the USS Doris Miller.

Military leaders, active-duty troops, veterans, civil rights organizations, and every day Americans have long called for changing the names of these installations and acknowledging that the cause for which they fought was wrong. Please join us in recognizing that now is the time to embrace our values to which we aspire as a nation and support this critical legislation.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony G. Brown".

Anthony G. Brown
Maryland's 4th District



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Bacon".

Don Bacon
Nebraska's 2nd District

Notable Military Installations Named After Confederate Leaders

- **Fort Rucker (Gen. Edmund Rucker) in Alabama** - Participated in the Battles of Franklin and Nashville and was wounded and captured in the latter. General Nathan Bedford Forrest organized a prisoner exchange and Rucker was with the army again when it surrendered at Gainesville, Alabama on May 9, 1865.
- **Fort Benning (Brig. Gen. Henry L. Benning) in Georgia** - Was active in Southern U.S. politics and an ardent secessionist, bitterly opposing abolition and the emancipation of slaves. Gen. Benning stated he would rather be stricken with illness and starvation than see African Americans liberated from slavery and be given equality as citizens.
- **Fort Gordon (Maj. Gen. John Brown Gordon) in Georgia** - Many have concluded that Gen. Gordon was a member of the Ku Klux Klan based on evasive answers during an 1871 hearing. He stated, "even sanctioned violence when necessary to preserve white-dominated society." Gen. Gordon strongly opposed Reconstruction during the late 1860s. He served in the US Senate and as the Governor of Georgia.
- **Camp Beauregard (Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard) in Louisiana** - Early in his life, he wrote that "the colored people were inferior, ignorant, and indolent." However, post Civil War, Gen. Beauregard believed that through the African American right to vote and cooperation, reconstruction and the burden of heavy taxation could be overcome and create a better future for the South.
- **Fort Polk (Gen. Leonidas Polk) in Louisiana** - Owned a sugarcane plantation and worked it with several hundred slaves.
- **Fort Bragg (Gen. Braxton Bragg) in North Carolina** - Was unpopular with subordinates and peers, known for a wild temper. His shortcomings as an army commander included his unimaginative tactics, mostly his reliance on frontal assault. Bragg lost his position as military adviser when Robert E. Lee was promoted to be general, and became a corps commander. He fled west when Richmond was defeated. Considered the worst General of the Civil War.
- **Fort Hood (Gen. John Bell Hood) in Texas** - Was the youngest soldier on either side of the war to be given command of an army. He led his men through Alabama and into Tennessee, where his army was severely damaged in the Battle of Franklin and was decisively defeated at the Battle of Nashville. As a result, Gen. Hood was relieved of command.
- **Fort A.P. Hill (Gen. A.P. Hill) in Virginia** - Was one of Stonewall Jackson's most capable subordinates and became commander of the Third Corps following Jackson's death. He was killed during the Union Army's offensive at the Third Battle of Petersburg. Hill stated he had no desire to live to see the collapse of the Confederacy.
- **Fort Lee (Gen. Robert E. Lee) in Virginia** - Was the commander of the Confederate States Army. Lee was criticised for aggressive and risky tactics, especially at Gettysburg. He accepted "the extinction of slavery" provided for by the Thirteenth Amendment, but opposed racial equality for African Americans.
- **Fort Pickett (Gen. George Pickett) in Virginia** - Gen. Pickett's division was famously decimated at Gettysburg. Pickett was accused of war crimes for ordering the execution of 22 Union prisoners.

